

The Platypus in South Australia

By H. M. HALE and J. D. SOMERVILLE.

Professor F. Wood Jones, whilst noting that many writers had recognised six species in the genus *Ornithorhynchus*, placed this unique Australian animal under one scientific name, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* (Shaw, 1799).⁵

Tom Iredale and E. LeG. Troughton in the Memoir VI of the Australian Museum, Sydney (1934), adopted four geographical races:—*Ornithorhynchus anatinus anatinus*, *triton*, *phoxinus*, and *crispus*.¹⁰ Troughton in his "Furred Animals of Australia" (1941), following Oldfield Thomas (1923) as to the first three and suggested the use of a race name for the Tasmanian form, uses the same geographical races as in the Memoir, giving the reasons for retaining such names and *inter alia* said "the platypus, however named, is just as interesting. To the reader these various races are mainly of interest in emphasising the extensive eastern range of these fascinating creatures."¹⁸ He gives the habitat of the four races as:—Coastal area from north of Sydney, southward through Victoria; upper waters of the Darling and Murray; Nth. Queensland; and Tasmania respectively.¹⁸ The western limit is placed as the 138th Meridian¹⁸ but Troughton makes no provision for a race name for the South Australian form. The recent River Murray specimen comes under *O. a. triton* (Thomas 1923).¹⁷ It is understood that when the article on the platypus was written for the "South Australian Naturalist"¹¹ no other record of its existence could be traced, however it is interesting to notice that in a discussion prior to the publication, Mr. N. B. Tindale, B.Sc., told one of us that the natives on one part of the Murray were able to describe the platypus and said there was an aboriginal name for it. At that particular time, H. M. Hale was absent overseas. On his return, hearing of the 1939-40 River Murray record, he instituted an extensive search, and many old records were discovered. It seems most desirable to tabulate these for general information, pending the publication by Mr. N. H. Finlayson of a monograph he proposes to write on the platypus, when the list may be considerably expanded.

No published substantiation of its past or present occurrence in South Australia is given

by Waite (late Museum Director) or Wood Jones (one-time Professor Adelaide University).

RECORDS.

1. Capt. (after Sir) George Grey, who was Governor of South Australia 1841-45, sent a specimen to the British Museum (2, 16, 17.)
2. Lower Murray according to Krefft. (2, 19.)
3. River Torrens, numerous in, in the early days according to A. Molineaux on the authority of A. Zietz. (15, 16, 17.)
4. Onkaparinga River, Robert Davenport, 1867. (8, 15, 16, 17, 18.)
5. Onkaparinga River near Hahndorf, 1873, quoted by the Misses Hill. (1, 11, 17.)
6. River Murray, Overland Corner, early 1890-ies, article by Miss A. E. Harwood, probably from information of Mrs. Miller, Wudinna, West Coast. (14.)
7. Torrens Lake, Adelaide, on the River Torrens, W. Forester found a dead one, say 1892 or 3. (3, 17.)
8. River Murray, near Murray Bridge, 1894, found by B. J. Jarman. (8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18.)
9. River Murray, near Taillem Bend, no particulars. (7, 8, 9, 17, 18?)
10. Skin of one from near Strathalbyn sold at auction say prior to 1895 to 1900, that is more than 40 to 45 years "ago" in 1940. (15, 16, 17.)
11. River Murray, where it enters Lake Alexandrina about four miles below Wellington, 1904. Caught by J. Braunsthal and forwarded to Adelaide by Mounted Constable F. Gardner. (12, 13, 15, 16, 17.)
12. Deception Creek, near Copley, rock carving which Dr. Basedow interprets as strongly suggestive of a platypus. Basedow also states, natives and bushmen describe an animal at Dalhousie Springs which may refer to the platypus. (4, 16, 17.)
13. In the interior recently (i.e., before 1925) seen by an informant of Hale and Tindale. (6, 17.)
14. Glenelg River in the South-East, no particulars. (8, 16, 17, 18.)

15. Finnis River, near Myponga; Mount Compass; and Nairne. Ron Minchin received reports that the platypus was seen near each of these places. (17.)
 16. Back Valley branch of the River Inman, seen by Mr. J. W. Crompton over a series of years up to 1938. (17.)
 17. River Murray, location not divulged, found by a fisherman, 1939. (12, 13, 16, 17.)
 18. "Six pairs of platypuses are being brought to Adelaide from Victoria," 1940. (16.)
 19. In Party Paper 71 of 1929 Fauna & Flora Board Report 1928-29, when 2 male and 1 female specimens were received from Tasmania.
 20. In Fauna and Flora Board Report for 1941, where it is stated that on February 19, 1941, 5 pairs were received from Victoria.
- Notes:—Nos. 4 and 5 may possibly be the same record, although the years are so divergent. The Misses Hill went to the Lakes with a party of which Mr. (later Sir) Samuel Davenport, a brother of Robert Davenport, was a member.
- Nos. 6, 9, 12, 13, 15 may be regarded as doubtful records.

REFERENCES.

1. What We Saw in Australia, by Rosamond and Florence Hill, 1875, p. 57.
2. Brit. Mus. Cat. of Marsupialia and Monotremata, 1888, O. Thomas, p. 387 et. seq.
3. The Province of South Australia, by J. D. Woods, 1875, p. 57.
4. Journal of the Royal Anthropol. Institute XLIV, 1915, pp. 202 and 205 and F.N. 2, pl. V.B, fig. 4., Dr. H. Basedow.
5. Mammals of South Australia, Prof. F. Wood Jones, part I, 1923, pp. 46-55.
6. Rec. S. Aust. Mus. III, 1925, p. 56, Hale and Tindale.
7. Rec. S. Aust. Mus. III, 1925, p. 17, Edgar R. Waite.
8. The Platypus, Harry Burrell, 1927, p. 141.
9. Reptiles of South Australia, Edgar R. Waite, 1929, p. 41.
10. The Australian Museum, Sydney, Memoir VI, 4/5/1934, Tom Iredale and E. Le G. Troughton, pp. 1 and 2.
11. The South Australian Naturalist, Dec. 30, 1939, Vol. 20, part 1, p. 16.
12. The Advertiser, South Australia, 7/3/1940, p. 16, col. 8.
13. The Advertiser, South Australia, 8/3/1940, p. 25, cols. 1 and 2.
14. The Advertiser, South Australia, 12/3/1940, p. 17, col. 1.
15. The Advertiser, South Australia, 13/3/1940, p. 21, cols. 1 and 2.
16. The News, South Australia, 16/4/1940, p. 4, col. 3.
17. Confirmation of the Occurrence of the Platypus in South Australia. Draft article by H. M. Hale in 1940 now enclosed in Museum Department Docket 32/1942.
18. Furred animals of Australia, Ellis Troughton, 1941, pp. 1-8, pl. 1.
19. Cat. Mamm. Aust. Mus., Krefft, p. 56 (1864), id. Vert. Lower Murray (1865), p. 22 (see p. 389 in No. 2 above).

The Public Library of South Australia

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The Public Library on North Terrace houses a wealth of information for the naturalist, the extent of which probably is not fully realised. The collection of books on Natural History is a large one; in addition the Library files many periodicals of absorbing interest to nature lovers.

The Library's history has been long and eventful. The object of this paper is to

trace briefly the growth of the institution from its very humble beginnings to its present position.

History.

The colony of South Australia was established in London in August 1834, and in the same month in that city a group of gentlemen founded "The South Australian Literary and